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IN COMMEMORATION  
OF THE  
SEVENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY  
OF  
BETHANY AND TUNBRIDGE  
LUTHERAN CONGREGATIONS  
RUGBY, NORTH DAKOTA  
JULY 4 - 7, 1963

☆ ☆

*In our history we see the footprints of God;  
In this moment we feel the breath of His Spirit;  
For the future we rest on His strong arms;  
Our God is with us!*

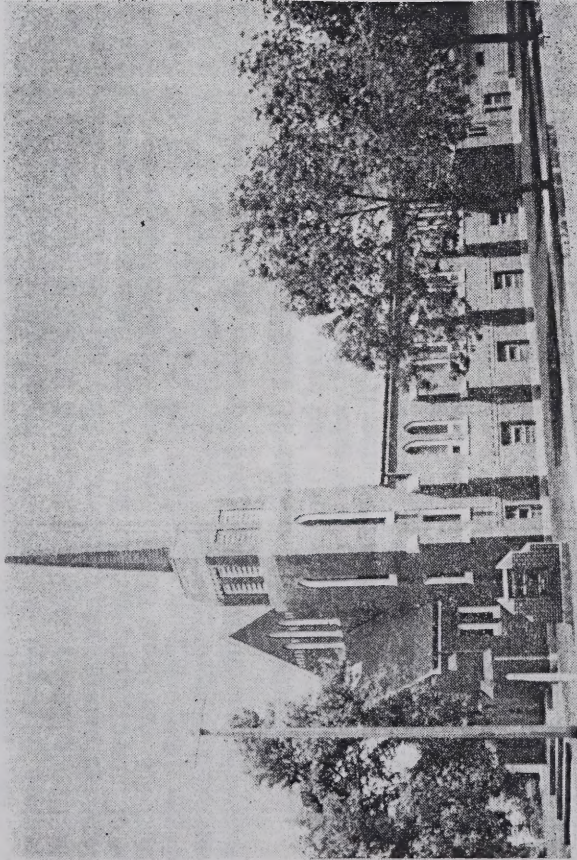
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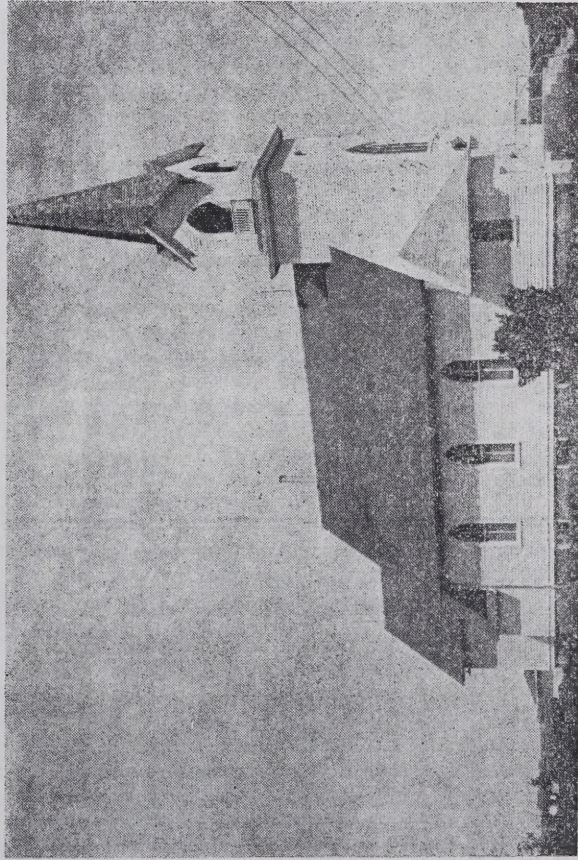
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# Bethany Lutheran Church



# Tunbridge Lutheran Church



# OUR HISTORY

## The Early Beginning: Rugby Menighed 1888-1905

In the spring and early summer of 1885, the first settlers came to the Rugby territory. The end of the Great Northern Railway was still at Devils Lake. The State of North Dakota was not yet organized, and of course, there was no Pierce County.

With hard work and great ambition the sturdy pioneers labored to transform the prairie from a wilderness to the beautiful community we enjoy today. The old settlers, and to a great extent their sons also, have now transferred the fruit of their toil and the responsibilities to a new generation.

The pioneer churches have been powerful agents in promoting the intellectual and religious welfare of the people of Rugby and of Pierce County. Before churches could be built, Christian services were conducted in small huts of the pioneers, with many an earnest prayer being sent up from early sod-houses. Neighbors lived far apart, travel was difficult, and the lot of the pioneer pastor was not an easy one. But with typical Christian willingness to sacrifice, they shared the hardships of the pioneers, and won for themselves a place in the hearts of the people they served. They were always welcome to the pioneer homes, but times were difficult, and it was not often that the meager salary they had been promised was promptly forthcoming.

The first Lutheran Congregation in Rugby was organized April 1, 1888, by Rev. J. U. Pedersen in a Rugby restaurant, owned by two young ladies, Miss Lina Iverson, who later became Mrs. C. A. Erickson, and Gertie Olson, who later married Sam Lovaas. There were fifteen charter members in the Congregation, the founding of which we are now celebrating. These names appear as charter members in the records of that meeting: Hans Hendrickson, Severin Larson, Christian Halvorson, C. F. Anderson, Charles Erickson, Morris Madsen, J. C. Broderson, Christian Bye, Lars Hansen, J. O. Anderson, J. E. Sjomann, H. N. Tjon, Jacob Grove, Sven Grove, and Bertel Sand.

Hans Hendrickson, Hans Tjon, and Morris Madsen were elected trustees, and C. F. Anderson, secretary. As there were no funds, it was not deemed necessary to elect a treasurer. The name of the Congregation was "Rugby Skandinavisk Luthersk Menighed" and it was the first Lutheran Congregation in Rugby, and the beginning of the present Bethany Congregation and Tunbridge Congregation.

Soon afterwards the following members were added to the Congregation: H. O. Anderson, Aslak Sand, N. Jacobson, Even Gunderson, Knute Monger, O. J. Braaten, J. Lavik, Erik Rudningen, A. Lavik, Lina Iverson, Lars Vigmostad, Gunder Hefta, Henry Anderson, Sam Lov-



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Bois de la Prairie Church

Bois de la Prairie Church

1988-1989

The Bois de la Prairie Church

YACHTING CLUB



aas, Mrs. Martha Hamre, Mrs. Ingeborg Poor, Halvor Grove, Charley Rasmusson, and Johannes Drege.

Rev. Pedersen left records showing that he had baptized three children in Rugby and vicinity. These were undoubtedly amongst the first children born and baptized in the Rugby vicinity and the names of parents and children, as they appeared in the records may be of interest here; born to Mr. and Mrs. Hans Anderson on October 14, 1887 was Oscar Odell. He was baptized November 13, 1887. Magda Alida was born to Mr. and Mrs. A. P. Ryding April 22, 1888, and baptized April 29, 1888. A son was born to Mr. and Mrs. Aslak Sand, who was christened Ingvald Cornelius on July 1, 1888.

At a meeting held November 21, 1889 in Morris Madsen's living house, it was reported that there had been collected and paid to Rev. Hagboe the amount of \$21.60 as salary for the year 1888. Rev. Hagboe took over the work shortly after it was organized. A year later, December 16, 1890, the congregation held its annual meeting at Sven Grove's house, but the treasurer was not present. Consequently no salary was forthcoming to the minister. It may be assumed that the treasury was empty.

Eleven years after the organization of the congregation, on February 9, 1899, articles of incorporation were made out for the congregation, signed by J. O. Anderson, A. Jelsing, and O. Paulson and were recorded in the Secretary of State's office at Bismarck.

Rev. J. U. Pedersen, who organized the congregation, was a young minister in the then existing "Konferens." He was born in Selbu, N. Dalen, Trondheim, Norway. He immigrated to the United States in 1870. After having graduated from Augsburg Seminary, he came to the Dakota Territory and accepted a call at Minot in 1887. It was from there he came to visit Pierce County to preach the Gospel and organize Christian congregations. Besides his congregation at Rugby, he organized the Denney congregation, now served by Rev. Ringdal, at Barton, and the Sand Hills congregation eight miles west of Barton in McHenry County. After quite a number of years of active service in Western North Dakota and Montana, he moved to Minneapolis, where he passed away in 1937.

The Rugby congregation, as well as the other Norwegian congregations in Pierce County and adjoining territory were soon taken over by Rev. Bernhard I. Hagboe, who served them from 1888 to 1899. Rev. Hagboe, was born in 1845 at Romsdalen, Norway, where he was reared and received his first education. As a young man he came to the United States in 1869 to attend Augsburg Seminary, then located at Marshall, Wisc. He continued his studies there for two years, and in 1872 he was ordained as a minister and was sent out to preach the Gospel to the pioneers in Northern Minnesota and North Dakota. He organized and served churches at Audubon, Lake Park, Crookston, and Moorhead in Minnesota. Then he continued westward across the Red River and worked around Fargo, Grand Forks, and Portland,

where he held meetings in the huts and houses of the settlers. His field of work was also extended to include Brookings, S. D. He came to Pierce County in 1888 and served churches around Barton, Rugby, Tunbridge, Berwick, Willow City, and the Sand Hills. He established his home east of Barton, and resided there until his death at the Good Samaritan Hospital in Rugby on May 27, 1934.

Rev. Pedersen and Rev. Hagboe were the pioneer preachers who blazed the way through the wilderness to preach the Gospel, baptize children, confirm the young folks, and be of general comfort to the settlers. They were of them and a part of them. With them they shared their ups and downs. They laid the foundation for the structure that this and future generations may continue to build upon. May their memory be blessed among us!

Up until the end of Rev. Hagboe's ministry in the congregation, there had been a number of preaching places, as no church had been built. Meetings were held in various buildings and homes, both at Rugby and in the Tunbridge community. Soon it became evident that for practical purposes it would be best for the people at Tunbridge to have their own congregation, and for the people at Rugby to have their own. Thus it came to pass that the people in Rugby and vicinity reorganized and called their part of the congregation "Bethania Menighed."

We shall now consider the Rugby and Tunbridge congregations separately.







# Bethany Lutheran Congregation

## Reorganizing

On Friday, March 31, 1905, the following men met to discuss the matter of reorganizing the Rugby part of the old congregation: Nels Sostrom, Henry W. Ellingson, Fingar T. Gronvold, Sivert O. Tofte, Ole O. Tofte, Ole S. Tofte, Ole T. Tofsrud, Ole M. Engeland, and Ole S. Noss.

The motion to reorganize prevailed and the name was changed to "Bethania Skandinavisk Evangelisk Lutherske Menighed af Rugby." The officers elected were, Sivert O. Tofte, F. T. Gronvold and Nels Sostrom, Trustees; O. T. Tofsrud, secretary, and H. W. Ellingson, treasurer. Ole S. Noss and Ole S. Tofte were elected as deacons. Rev. Carl S. Vang was elected as pastor for the congregation and commenced to serve immediately.

## The First Building

Motion to build a church was discussed and adopted. Upon motion made and carried, Rev. Carl S. Vang, Sivert O. Tofte, and O. T. Tofsrud were elected as a committee to solicit subscriptions for money for building purposes. On July 5 of the same year, at a meeting called for that purpose, Ole S. Tofte, H. W. Ellingson and Nels Sostrom were named on a committee to secure plans and specifications for the church.

On July 28, another meeting was held for the purpose of asking the members of the church to each pick up and haul in three-quarters of a cord of prairie stones for the foundation of the church. A building committee was also selected, consisting of O. T. Tofsrud, Nels Sostrom, H. W. Ellingson, F. T. Gronvold, and Ole S. Tofte.

At a meeting held August 21 it was fully decided to build a church and that it should not exceed \$2,500 in cost. The church was not finished until 1907 and the cost exceeded the above figure by several hundred dollars. Meanwhile the services were regularly conducted in homes and public buildings and new members were added each year.

Of no little interest is the list of names of those who contributed most toward the building of the church: Rev. Carl S. Vang, Tom Gronvold, Ole Tofte, and Andrew Mygland, each gave fifty dollars. Nels Sostrom, J. O. Anderson, H. W. Ellingson, Ole S. Tofte, Sivert O. Tofte and A. H. Jones each gave one hundred dollars. F. T. Gronvold and O. T. Tofsrud each gave two hundred dollars. The Ladies Aid contributed \$665.37.

With this kind of material support and with fine leadership the work prospered. Since that time the Word of God has been preached regularly in the church.

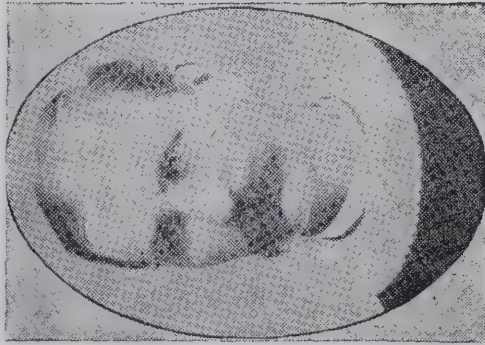
Improvements were made on the building from time to time. Just prior to the 50th anniversary in 1938 a ten-foot addition was built



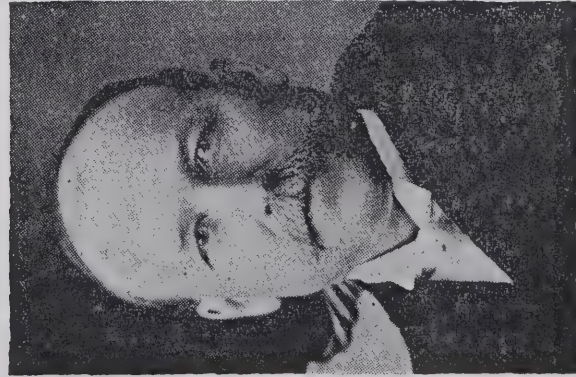
Rev. B. I. Hagboe



Rev. C. J. Nestvold



Rev. J. U. Pedersen



Rev. Carl S. Vang









This stage of the fire that consumed the old church on January 20th, 1947 shows that the fire started from an overheated chimney near the chancel of the church, and went up into the roof structure and progressed through the roof section first, and the following picture shows the roof burned, with walls standing.

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This shows the steeple falling as the fire progressed, this also shows that the bell had fallen to the basement thus saving it from the intense heat of the building fire.

on the front of the church and both the basement and main auditorium were completely redecorated. The Dorcas Society gave a new carpet for the aisle and other additions were made. The congregation was debt free on its 50th anniversary.

On October 22, 1944, a new chancel and new stained glass windows were dedicated by the T. O. Burntvedt, the president of the Lutheran Free Church. The windows were a memorial to Mr. F. T. Gronvold, a pioneer member of the congregation. The windows contained many of the most loved Christian symbols and were made of American and European Art Glass. The chancel was a new addition, enlarging the church.

All of these treasures, together with the labor of many years, were wiped out by a disastrous fire on January 20, 1947, that totally destroyed the church and its contents.

### The Present Church

On the first Sunday after the fire the congregation decided to build a new church. Work was begun the following spring. Architect John Houkom of Fargo was employed. Much volunteer labor was done by the members. After worshipping in various places in the community, the congregation rejoiced in its first service in the new basement in September, 1948, and upstairs in the new church September 11, 1949. The church and its furnishings came to well over \$90,000.00.

The members of the building committee were: Miss Nettie Ellingson, Joel Gronvold, Clarence Thorfinnson, Aaron Gronvold, Carl Anderson, Oscar Blessum, Frederick Hagen, Lewis Hagen, Hans Dahl, Knut Oksendahl, Art Ellingson and Pastor Harald Grindal.

Since the dedication on Oct. 22, 1950, the debt on the church has been completely erased and many more additions made such as an electronic organ and the beautiful chancel windows of stained glass. Through a gift from Mrs. F. T. Gronvold, the steeple was constructed on the church and dedicated on May 20, 1962, in memory of Aaron Gronvold.

An interesting point of continuity between the old and new church is the bell. During the fire the bell toppled from the steeple into the ruins. All assumed it was worthless so it sat in storage for several years. By chance in December, 1960 it was found to work beautifully. So it was placed in the steeple of the new church and restored to service on Easter Sunday, 1961. The bell had been given by the Ladies Aid in 1927. The Ladies Aid history shows an order for "1 tone G bell and clapper, 1040 pounds with mountings complete, \$524.00".

### The Parsonage

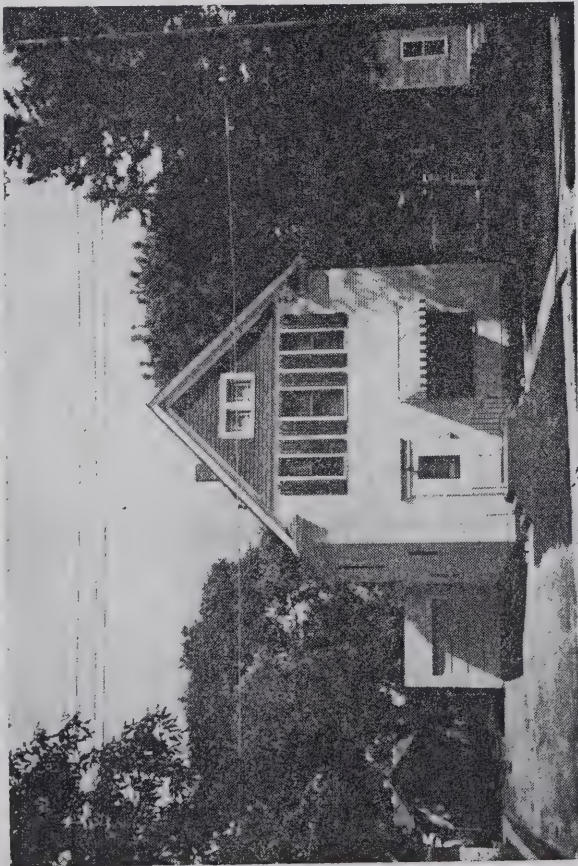
The first parsonage at 241 East Second Street was built by Rev. Vang about 1906. Pastor Vang later sold it to the parish. Berwick owns 5/16ths, Tunbridge 4/16ths, and Bethany 7/16ths. This house served until 1960 when it was disposed of on a trade to secure ground for a new Sunday School building for Bethany. In the summer of







## Former Parsonage



## Present Parsonage



1960 the beautiful new parsonage at 1002 3rd Ave. S. E. was built at a cost of \$20,000 plus much volunteer labor. The building committee was - Berwick: Otto Paulson; Tunbridge: Jesse Sand; Bethany: Joel Gronvold, Warren Parkman, and Lester Blessum. This project was an example of the excellent cooperation that has existed between the three congregations of the parish through the years.

### Recent Developments

In the midst of a crop failure in the fall of 1961, Bethany took a step of faith and inaugurated the radio broadcast of the Sunday morning service over KGCA. With no room in the budget the broadcast would hopefully be sustained just by special gifts from listeners. The broadcast has been greatly appreciated and well supported.

During this festival we have the privilege of dedicating the stained glass windows created for our nave by Conrad Pickel Studio of Waukesha, Wisconsin. They repeat the gospel message in simplicity and beauty and will be an inspiration to all who enter our church. The story of Christ's life, from His birth through his sending of the Holy Spirit to His disciples, is told in richness of color and dignity of form. They are a great compliment to our beautiful chancel window with its message "Come Unto Me". The cost of windows in the nave is \$7,680.00.

The congregation recently approved plans for a Sunday School building to be attached to the church. It will provide 13 classrooms and 2 offices. The cost is not to exceed \$42,000.00. Construction should begin late this summer.

### The Church Body

Our first 75 years were spent as part of the Lutheran Free Church. On Feb. 1, 1963, we merged with the American Lutheran Church. While we are reluctant to leave the blessings and joys of the LFC, we also pray that God will make our new, wider fellowship a better avenue of service in His Kingdom through the years to come.

### Our People

Most precious of all our treasures are our people who have worked and worshipped together through the years. God has been most generous with us. Few of the pioneers are still with us. Many of the younger members too have died. Many have moved away. Many gave their lives in fighting the battles of our great nation. But as our children grow up and as new members join us, the work continues and our heritage is preserved.

Through the years just one son of the congregation has gone into the ministry, Rev. Holger Hagen. We are proud of him and pray that many more will follow him in years to come.

We are grateful to God for the many dedicated pastors who have served our parish. We trust that God will continue to bless us with pastors and lay people that are willing to lead and labor in the spreading of the Gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the world.

Let us by the grace of God continue steadfast in our faith.

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# Tunbridge Lutheran Congregation

After the division in 1905 the Tunbridge group continued as a separate congregation under the name "Rugby Skandinavisk Evangelisk Lutherske Menighed." The first officers after the division were: Bertel Sand, Knut Monger and A. G. Lindberg, trustees; H. Grove and S. Grindal, deacons; Andrew Sand, secretary; and Hans Tjon, treasurer. A church was built on the grounds where the present Tunbridge Church now stands. The congregation progressed rapidly without pause until 1911, when a stroke of lightning set fire to the church, burning it to the ground. At the annual meeting of the congregation that year there was a deficit of \$19.00. However, the congregation continued its work, voting as usual a strong term of parochial school, although it was not deemed possible to build at once. In 1912 Knut Monger was elected to supervise a subscription of funds for the purpose of building a new church. In 1913 it was decided to rebuild and Hans Tjon and Peter Fosness were elected as a subscription committee. The following month a special business meeting of the congregation was held at the Lars Nordlie home at which the subscription committee reported that \$3,050.00 had been subscribed toward the new church. Anfin Jelsing, Anfin Bale and H. N. Tjon were elected as building committee and the work of rebuilding proceeded at once. Another meeting was held the following March at the A. G. Bale home in regard to letting the contract for the building of the church. Rev. P. A. Strommen, who had recently been called as pastor, presided at this meeting. The church was soon finished and still stands, having been kept in excellent condition. Dedication services for the church were held in 1915.

In 1914 it was decided to change the name of the congregation from "Rugby Menighed" to "Tunbridge Menighed."

Tunbridge congregation has always put great emphasis on Christian Education. Records show that in the early days six weeks of parochial school were held each summer. We still maintain a regular Sunday School and an annual Vacation Bible School with about 22 pupils. Within the Ladies Aid and the Suremus Circle there also is fine emphasis on Bible Study.

The Young People's Society, or Luther League as it is now called, has been a special blessing through the years. The Sunday evening programs have provided an occasion for the gathering of families for good, informal fellowship.

The congregation has done especially well in supporting the benevolences of our church body, usually exceeding its goals in a generous way. We took our full share of the labor on the new parsonage and have little or nothing left of our share of the indebtedness on the parsonage.

No major changes have been made in the church for several

years. Additions have been made in the form of a large memorial Bible on the altar, a hymn board in memory of Mr. Lewis Jelsing, and outdoor signs both at the church and on highway No. 2, which were placed by the Otto Stutrud family.

Although some of the early records are missing, Mrs. Osmund Selland has developed a list showing that one hundred and eleven persons have been confirmed at Tunbridge. The first person confirmed here was Martin Grove and he is still with us.

Through the years many of the early members have passed away. Many of the youth have moved away. But God has always provided many to carry on the work. May His blessing continue to rest upon us and our people in the years to come.



## PASTORS WHO HAVE SERVED BETHANY AND TUNBRIDGE

Rev. J. U. Pedersen Organized the Rugby Menighed in 1888  
Passed away in Minneapolis in 1937

Rev. B. I. Hagboe Served from 1888 to 1899  
Passed away in Rugby in 1934

Rev. Carl S. Vang Served from 1899 to 1914  
Passed away in Minneapolis in 1958

Rev. H. E. Bode Served as assistant to Rev. Vang from 1908 to 1911

Rev. P. A. Strommen Served from 1913 to 1917  
Presently retired and living in Minneapolis

Rev. C. J. Nestvold Served from 1917 to 1924  
Passed away in 1947

Rev. R. H. Hofstad Served from 1924 to 1936  
Presently retired and living in Odessa, Minn.

Rev. Luthard Gjerde Served from 1936 to 1946  
Presently Executive Director for Lutheran Welfare Society in the state of Minnesota  
Resides in Minneapolis

Rev. Harald Grindal Served from 1946 to 1954  
Presently the Senior Pastor of Oak Grove Lutheran Church in Minneapolis

Rev. Albert Framstad Served as interim pastor for 7 months in 1955  
Presently retired and living in St. Paul, Minn.

Rev. James Peterson Served from 1955 to 1958  
Presently the Pastor of Crown Lutheran Church in Seattle, Washington

Student Richard Hagestuen Served as interim pastor in summer of 1958

Presently the pastor of the parish at Powers Lake, N. Dak.

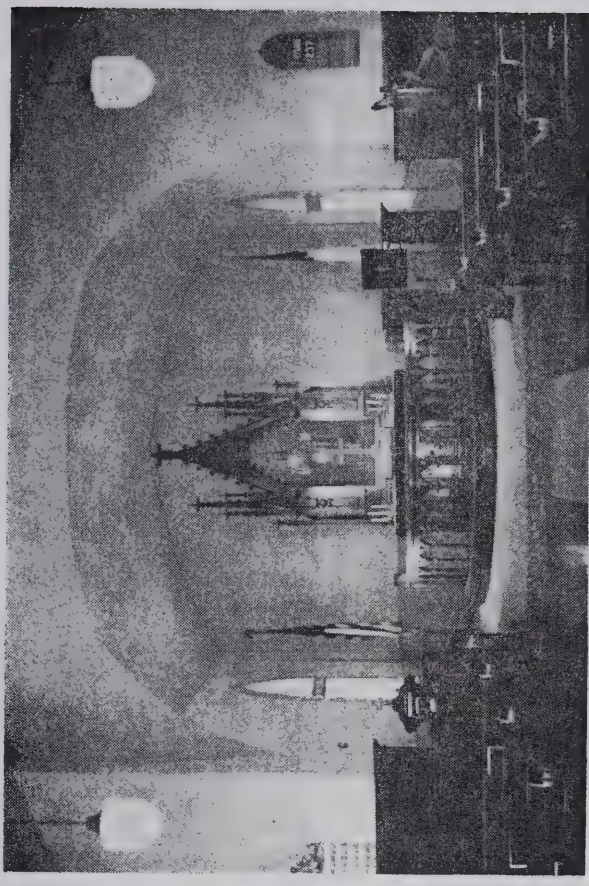
Rev. David H. Rokke The present pastor  
Came in August, 1958



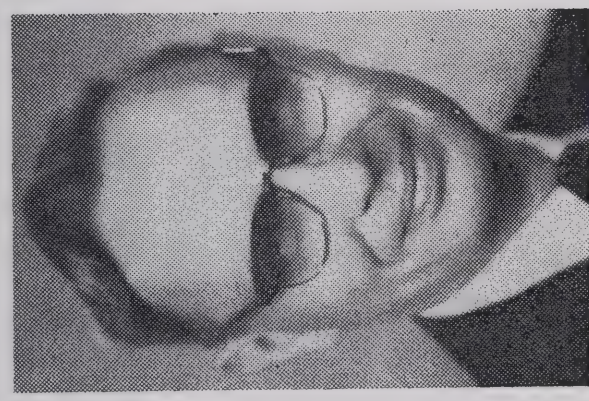
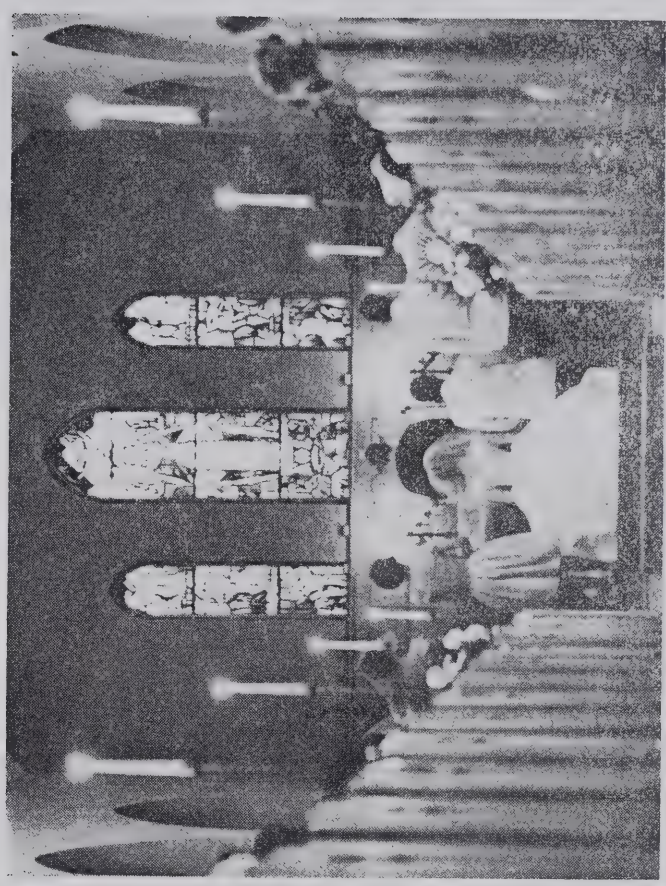




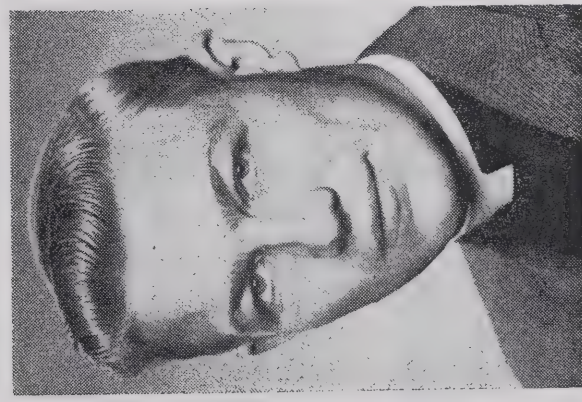
Interior Of Tunbridge



Interior Of Bethany



Rev. Harald Grindal



Rev. David H. Rokke



Rev. James Peterson



Rev. Luthard Gjerde

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# *Committees In Charge Of Festivities*

## COMMITTEE ON GENERAL ARRANGEMENTS

Raymond Halvorson, Chairman	Mrs. Jesse Sand
Art Ellingson	Mrs. Halvor Norheim
J. M. Anderson	Mrs. Frank Johnson
Fred Hagen	Mrs. Melvin Larvick
Oscar Blessum	Mrs. Otto Paulson
Herbert Liebelt	Mrs. Chester Teigen

## COMMITTEE ON COMMEMORATIVE BOOKLET

Jesse Sand	Mrs. Osmund Selland
Oscar Blessum	J. M. Anderson
Mrs. Alice Gronvold	

## COMMITTEE ON INVITATIONS

Art Ellingson	Mrs. Herman Tjon
Mrs. Fritz Tofte	Mrs. Carl Jelsing
Miss Nettie Ellingson	Mrs. Lewis Jelsing

## COMMITTEE ON MEALS

Mrs. Art Engeland	Mrs. Herman Tjon
Mrs. J. R. Parkman	Mrs. Melvin Larvick

## COMMITTEE ON USHERS

Hartvig Sliper	Arnold Larson
Walter Stutrud	Orris Haugen

## PROGRAM COMMITTEE

Fred Hagen	Elise Anderson
Mrs. Halvor Norheim	Mrs. Hans Egeland
Mrs. Anfin Tweet	Miss Bertha Tofsrud
Alfred Bale	Mrs. Melvin Bryn
Mrs. Chester Teigen	

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